

NEWSLETTER



AN INFORMATION BULLETIN FOR MEMBERS IN LONDON REGION

May 2016

Welcome to the latest edition of the London Regional Office newsletter; a termly communication from us containing useful, topical information about your Union.

These are times of great change, of course, in further and higher education. UCU is at the centre of the fight to protect the interests and the employment of staff across the sectors. It is important that you are involved in the process of identifying the right priorities for your Union, and that you participate in our campaigns.

It is also very important that you make sure that the Union holds accurate contact and employment information about you. UCU increasingly needs to be able to contact members quickly. Please take a moment to visit <https://members.ucu.org.uk/> signing in with your membership number and verify the information we hold.

UCU membership subscription rates are set against bands of employment income. Your access to the Union's services may be affected if you are not paying the correct subscription rate for your income – details of the rates are [here](#). Please check the amount you are paying in UCU subscriptions against these rates, and let us know urgently if you think you are not paying at the correct level.

Until next time, thank you as ever for your support, Barry, Greg and Una (Regional Officials)

The heart of the union-meet the reps

Vibeke Fussing – Branch Chair of Bromley & Orpington UCU Branch

Having moved to London from Manchester in 2008 to take the post of Curriculum Coordinator for Creative Industries Vibeke took on the role of Branch Chair at Bromley & Orpington College in 2011. During that short time she has already guided the Branch through re-organisations as well as a merger between Bromley & Orpington. Along with the usual personal cases and seeking improved Terms & Conditions for the members she is also currently rising to the challenge of a similar merger process as both Greenwich and Bexley colleges have committed to become part of Bromley (South East Colleges Group) by 31st July 2016.

A long-time supporter of and campaigner on social justice issues (LGBT, CND, Stop Clause 28, Support for Miners, Anti-Austerity, Convoy to Calais etc.) becoming part of the UCU Branch Committee was a natural fit for Vibeke – this innate commitment, with various UCU Rep training/briefings has meant that the Branch has been very effectively supported and promoted.

Like many Lecturers Vibeke's life outside of work is constrained, however personal interests are being a "Labour Party member (thanks to the election of Corbyn), walking the dogs, and disposing of the (mostly) dead creatures that the cats bring me and very occasionally seeing my long suffering girlfriend."

A week in the life of Trevor Murrells – King's College

It's been busy this week with a management/trade union health & safety meeting and a Joint Negotiating Committee meeting. The latter included many familiar topics: national pay award, London weighting, lecture capture, Prevent and suitability of new buildings. King's has recently acquired property in the Aldwych Quarter. However, it remains to be seen whether they can be made 'fit for purpose' for staff. I managed to catch up with Jim (branch president) and Barry (regional official) at the JNC which was good.

I'm overseeing an e-survey asking members' views on the College's latest London weighting offer. To support this campaign we have produced a report on staff pay (downward!) trends at King's. Usually I get to the Waterloo site social/drop-in (for casework), but failed to make it this week. This is a pity as it's an opportunity to sound off over a cup of tea, an essential part of my week at King's,

Area Reviews of Post-16 provision in London

In the previous newsletter members were informed that the government had announced a review of further education provision in England. The document is called "reviewing post-16 education and training institutions" and represents a process which is likely to mean the biggest change within the sector since colleges were removed from local government control and incorporated in the early 1990s.

The London Picture - London has been divided into four sub regions of London. West, Central, East and South. The West and Central having started earlier are further down the process than East and South however it seems to have finally dawned on the powers that be that any review needs to consider London as a whole rather than by sub region. Students in London have many travel to study options, often across sub region boundaries, and the skills strategy drawn up for London is also cross boundaries. Therefore, there will be a slowing down of the West and Central sub regions to allow East and South to catch up with an expectation that a long list of London options will be drawn up before the end of the academic year. It is expected early in the autumn term that a short list of options will be agreed upon for consultation.

UCU and the other trade unions continually raise the issue of the lack of a staff voice in the sub regional meeting. However, although we do meet with the FE commissioner's office it gives the unions scant information and we only have access to the minutes of the meeting which UCU suspect are heavily sanitised. UCU continues to be critical of some of the plans already in place for mergers that are taking place outside the review and questions whether a larger college, for the sake of it, will offer students the best learning experience. UCU remains sceptical that the true agenda is to make further efficiency saving within a sector already cut to the bone.

Next Steps - The Regional Office in conjunction with your local representatives will keep you up to date with any information received from the steering groups and how these decisions may affect your college.

Congress

Next week UCU's annual Congress will be held in Liverpool. For three days, delegates from UCU branches across the post-16 education sector will debate campaigns, set policies and agree (or not) rule changes. For many members this can seem arcane and rather distant from their working lives. Yet Congress is important: it is the sovereign body of the union, setting policies and deciding what the union's priorities should be. The National Executive reports back over the past year, explaining how it carried out the wishes of the previous Congress and raising new issues for debate and decision. This is how its members are held to account.

Although Congress is a three-day event, it should also be seen as part of a much lengthier process that lasts all year. Branches elect delegates (usually at the same time as they elect branch officers) to represent the branch at Congress. Small branches are grouped together to send a delegate between them. From January on, branches also discuss whether they would like to send a motion to Congress, raise a particular issue or ask for action. All of those accepted for debate are then sent out again to branches in case any would like to propose changes and to allow branches to decide how they would like delegates to vote on controversial matters. These motions – and any suggested amendments – will be debated at Congress.

If you have never attended Congress, we would urge you to consider standing for election for next year. Congress provides an unparalleled opportunity to see how the union operates, to meet delegates from other branches, to learn how fellow members are tackling issues in their workplaces, to attend meetings about issues of the day and to socialise with like-minded people. Above all, you will be contributing to the development of UCU and ensuring that the views of your branch are heard on a wide range of issues.



MEET THE TEAM: My name is Esmilda Yates and I am the Regional Administrator for the London North region. I joined UCU in December 2000 when we were known as the Association of University Teachers and based in Russell Square. As Regional Administrator I am the first point of contact for members. My duties include maintaining the membership data base where members details are recorded, the data base is also used for retrieving information when running ballots. It produces matrices, membership lists, statistics and is also used to record details of training events. I also manage the CRM system where member's cases are logged. I deal with general correspondence, maintaining diaries and filing systems. I am a team member and enjoy working at UCU. In my spare time I enjoy gospel singing, dining out and the theatre.

The Trade Union Act

After much argument and debate, this Act has now been passed. Whilst the Government conceded a number of changes in response to robust campaigning from unions and others, the Act will still transform the law on industrial action and have a detrimental impact in many other areas affecting trade unions and workers' rights. The main changes are as follows:

- **Balloting** - At least 50% of members entitled to vote must do so. Also, as UCU members work in an 'important public service', it is likely that at least 40% of all members entitled to vote in the ballot must support the action. A majority in support will still be required. Employers will be entitled to have 14 days' notice of industrial action and the right to take action will lapse six months after the date of the ballot.
- **Picketing** - A picket supervisor who is familiar with the Code of Practice on Picketing will have to be appointed. We will also have to tell the police the name of the supervisor, where the picketing is taking place and how they should contact the supervisor. The supervisor will have to have a letter confirming that the picket is approved by UCU and where the employer, or the employer's agent, asks to see the letter, it will have to be shown. The supervisor should be present at the picket or be readily contactable and when attending the picket, they will have to wear something to identify themselves.
- **Trade union duties** - Your employers will have to publish information relating to time off taken by representatives for trade union duties and activities, e.g. the number of reps, how much time they take off and how much your employers spend on this time off.
- **Political fund** - New members will have to expressly opt in to this fund.
- **Check off** - Public sector employers will only be able to provide a check off service if their workers have the option to pay their subs by other means and arrangements have been made for the union to make reasonable payments to the employer to cover the costs. UCU members *are* able to pay their subs by other means, and we are encouraging all members to move onto the Direct Debit method of payment.

There are also a number of additional administrative burdens on unions coupled with greater scrutiny by the Certification Officer ("CO"). The CO is responsible for statutory functions relating to trade unions. Unions may also have to pay a financial levy to fund the CO.

FE National pay claim 2016/17

This year's pay claim has been submitted on behalf of UCU. The claim is for an increase of £1.00 extra per hour for all staff. In addition we are seeking that

- All colleges ensure fair pay for women by conducting Equal Pay Audits or reviewing any existing audits; identifying any gender pay gaps; and constructing an action plan with the Trade Unions locally to eliminate any such gaps.
- Hourly paid, temporary, fixed term or casual staff working in a college for more than two years be offered a permanent post on a pro-rata basis that is commensurate with the hours they actually work.
- The starting rate to be no lower than the Living Wage foundation rates of £8.25 outside of London and £9.40 in London after the annual uprating. Colleges to become Living wage Foundation accredited.

Dates have now been set for two National Joint Forum meetings to deal with this year's pay claim in June and July and members will be kept updated as talks progress.

HE pay campaign 2016/17

Since 2009 HE members' salaries have reduced in value by 14.5% against inflation, yet there is a surplus of £1.8bn across UK higher education and those in charge of HE institutions have awarded themselves pay rises three to four times higher than those achieved by rank and file academics. It is in this context that the HE employers nationally have offered a mere 1.1% pay increase for 2016/17, in response to which the UCU ballot of HE members resulted in votes of 65% for strike action and 77% for action short of a strike. The other HE unions are moving to ballot for industrial action also. It is clear that industrial action is now necessary to achieve any movement from the HE employers on either the pay offer, the gender pay gap, or the use of casual contracts across the sector.

UCU is calling on HE members to take two days of strike action on 25 and 26 May. From 25 May the union will be asking HE members to 'work to contract' and to work no longer than 37 hours a week every week until further notice.

Branches will be asked to choose a further day of strike action in June or July aimed at creating maximum local disruption (e.g. an open day, a busy day for exam boards, or a graduation day) and the union is preparing for strike action on 18 August, A Level results day in England, with similar plans for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, aimed at hitting university admissions.

On 19 May a meeting was held with the employers at which it was hoped that they might see sense and improve on their offer. Sadly this was not the case and no improvement was offered on any of the elements. It is thus very clear that UCU, (and our sister unions in HE), will have to engage in industrial action and demonstrate that we are prepared to fight for fair pay.



London Regional Committee meet 11th June 2016

Casework training: 8th June

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/caseworklondon>

Reps 2 training (must have completed Reps 1)
15th-17th June 2016.

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/6650/Rep-2-Representing-UCU-members>